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GENERAL DEBATE

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL DRUG CONTROL PROGRAMME

A strategy for the United Nations International Drug Control Programme **

Note by the Executive Director

Addendum

This document contains elements of a strategy for UNDCP. It reflects internal discussions, aspirations and ideas of UNDCP staff and attempts to incorporate these with the mandates provided through the United Nations legislative organs.

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Background

1. Over the last twenty years the spread of drug abuse has accelerated. As the 20th century draws to a close, drug abuse affects more countries than at any time in history and is disrupting the welfare of individuals, families and communities more fundamentally than ever before. Illicit drug production, processing, trafficking and use are undermining opportunities for long-term individual and social development, for real economic growth of countries, and for international cooperation.

2. While the problem is not a new one, it has become a more complicated one in today's world. Intricate, organized and international in scope, it belies any simple solution or unilateral action at the national level. Thus, while the human and social costs associated with drug abuse have escalated and become a major preoccupation to some communities, local agricultural systems and economies have become increasingly linked with, and dependent on, the production of illicit drugs. Similarly, while the costs of law enforcement and social services required to deal with drug abuse have become a drain on many national budgets, the processing, distribution and sale of illicit drugs have come to represent a major source of revenue for selected groups of people and for less than scrupulous banking systems. The situation is further complicated by the emergence of new drugs or forms of drugs, requiring the development of new responses.

3. Historically and culturally, drug abuse has represented different things for different groups. Some of the drugs now being widely abused have been part of traditional medical practice or ceremonies, or have been used in coping with inhospitable environments. Today, seeking chemically induced pleasure has become a part of certain sub-cultures and is increasingly seen as an accepted means of escape for many young people. Meanwhile, the growing of the raw materials used to produce illicit drugs is perceived as an economic necessity and a potential means of development in some economically deprived agricultural communities.

4. The varying significance of illicit drugs to different people and cultures renders the work to control drug abuse all the more difficult. At one time or another most countries as well as the international community have attempted to control drug abuse and reduce the human damage associated with it. The approaches used, however, have varied in scope and effectiveness. Some have emphasized control and repression, while others have focused on prevention and treatment. The size of the problem today reflects the limited success of many of these initiatives and a collective

failure on the part of many countries in the past to confront the problem assertively and coherently within and across their frontiers. In a world with a rapidly changing physical environment and social fabric, the spread of drug abuse is now itself occurring at a faster pace. Its implications for present and future generations of young people make it an ethical and political priority.

Response

5. The United Nations Decade Against Drug Abuse must become a watershed. If drug abuse is to be effectively controlled, a new, comprehensive and vigorous mobilization of national and international resources must be undertaken around globally accepted principles and aims. The establishment of UNDCP to lead and coordinate the fight against drug abuse signals the international community's commitment to this new effort. It is an acknowledgement of the need for a global effort commensurate with the magnitude of the problem.

6. UNDCP will move assertively with Member States in a mutually supportive partnership that fosters new courses of action and encourages the implementation of creative strategies with genuine dedication by all concerned. The challenge will be to identify and pragmatically seize new opportunities for action while resisting simplistic solutions that only substitute one symptom for another. It will be necessary to assess carefully what has worked and not worked in the past and explore new directions and promote balanced strategies that emphasize the most modern techniques of law enforcement and control over production, combined with sound and enlightened principles of prevention, treatment and rehabilitation.

7. Policies and programmes to prevent drug abuse must also acknowledge the cultural and social diversity of peoples and communities. The needs and aspirations of all peoples and countries, south as well as north, must be respected and built on. There must be a greater sharing of responsibility in the fight against drug abuse. Individuals, families, communities, and national governments as well as international organizations must participate jointly and with more determination than ever before.

Goals and objectives

8. Within the framework of this global challenge the goal of UNDCP will be to work in partnership with all countries to prevent

and control drug production, trafficking and abuse. UNDCP will strengthen its work in a number of key areas and will specifically give added priority to working with countries in order to:

(a) **define and increase awareness of the problem** by helping countries develop rapid but reliable assessments of the magnitude and implications of drug abuse in a way that can contribute to the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of comprehensive national multi-sectoral master plans that are technically sound and feasible;

(b) **strengthen national and international drug abuse control** by training and up-grading staff, promoting internationally consistent legislative approaches, facilitating cooperation between judicial and law enforcement agencies, promoting the control of precursors, reinforcing action against money laundering, and strengthening the technical capacity of national drug control agencies;

(c) **enhance north-south and south-south cooperation** by mobilizing and structuring specific collaboration between selected countries around programme and project objectives and plans;

(d) **reconstruct the social and economic fabric of communities** that have been disrupted by drug abuse problems by reducing the damage associated with drug production and abuse and creating new environments that are resistant to these phenomena and favourable to social and economic development;

(e) **promote new community partnerships** by bringing together and collaborating with governments, non-governmental organizations, international agencies, local authorities, trade unions, schools, professional associations, community groups and others around innovative but practical operational plans and policies based on shared responsibility;

(f) **identify new directions and concepts** through the promotion of international multidisciplinary discussions on technical, policy and programme issues of national and international drug abuse control;

(g) **improve the capacity of countries to prevent drug abuse** by applying state-of-the-art techniques of public education, recognizing that programmes must be tailored to the special needs of different target groups.

Priorities

9. The activities below address these goals and objectives and outline some of the areas UNDCP will develop or emphasize:

(i) Controlling drug production, processing and trafficking

10. UNDCP will work with Member States to strengthen the means of controlling all aspects of the illicit drug industry. Within the past decade, new information has emerged concerning the ways in which illicit drugs are processed, transported, and distributed. This knowledge will form the basis for reinforced collaboration with Member States in a number of areas. The spread of illicit drugs, for example, could not function without the laundering of drug money. Therefore, in active collaboration with governments, national and international banking systems and trade associations, UNDCP will give priority to the development and implementation of legislative and law enforcement initiatives that allow money launderers to be identified, exposed and prosecuted. Similarly, the importance of precursors for drug processing has become more evident, and it is clear that their availability needs to be more effectively controlled. UNDCP will therefore help formulate new legislative arrangements between countries and encourage the chemical industry to develop and monitor accords of its own.

11. UNDCP will give added priority to reviewing and promoting technical dialogue in the field of drug abuse. It will also increase its capacity to assess technical issues, set standards and provide guidelines for action in key areas of prevention and control. During the UN Decade against Drug Abuse, UNDCP will bring together national representatives, technical experts and other concerned parties in discussions of critical themes, with the objective of promoting dialogue and innovation.

(ii) Implementing treaties and harmonizing legislation

12. UNDCP will enhance its cooperation with Member States to ensure global implementation of treaties and regional harmonization of legislation. It will in particular provide the technical assistance needed to enable as many States as possible to ratify the 1988 Convention. It will also increase its support to countries to ensure technically sound and timely updating of national legislation.

(iii) Defining the problem

13. UNDCP will devote greater attention to helping countries identify and define the parameters of their drug abuse problem

to permit better planning and formulation of national master plans appropriate to the situation in their own countries. UNDCP will enhance the capacity of countries to undertake such situation assessments and translate them into operational policies and programmes tailored to the specific needs and possibilities for action. It will collaborate with a variety of regional and national research and information centres that can evaluate trends, improve the monitoring system and otherwise contribute to better data to be used in planning.

(iv) **Promoting north-south and south-south collaboration**

14. UNDCP will give high priority to promoting and facilitating technical cooperation between all countries. Drug abuse is no longer a problem unique to any one region or group of states. Developing and industrialized countries alike suffer from shortages of human and financial resources. What tends to differentiate them are their disparate levels of socio-economic development and the means they are able to dedicate to drug abuse control. Within all countries there are nevertheless technical and human resources that can be encouraged and mobilized. UNDCP will help developing countries in this respect so that they can assume full responsibility for their own drug abuse control activities consistent with their cultural, social and political realities. UNDCP will increasingly mobilize and facilitate technical exchange between "north" and "south" and between countries in the "south" and will promote the twinning of countries, institutions and NGOs.

(v) **Education, training and promotion**

15. UNDCP will increase its commitment to education and training. National and regional training activities will be reinforced and modern and innovative techniques will be used to accelerate human resources development in such areas as legislation, law enforcement, prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and community development.

16. UNDCP will also give high priority to working with policy makers and community leaders to improve their understanding of, and sensitivity to, drug abuse and its effects. Regular consultations will be organized with parliamentary bodies and other leadership groups, and up-dated information on trends and implications of drug abuse will be routinely provided. Through this and other mechanisms UNDCP will foster the active involvement of the private sector, trade unions, professional associations, national educational systems and non-governmental organizations.

17. As the public also needs to be made more aware of the problem of drug abuse, UNDCP will make communication and education a priority and develop initiatives to reach the public at large, identifying special target and risk groups such as teenagers, with factual and culturally tailored information. These activities will make enhanced and experimental use of new communication technologies as well as innovative use of radio, television, film and the printed media.

(vi) **Reconstructing communities**

18. The rehabilitation and reconstruction of communities that have been disrupted by illicit drugs will assume a high profile within UNDCP's work. In communities where the growing or processing of illicit drugs has become a major activity, local economies and lifestyles have often become inconsistent with national cultures and economies. Similarly, where the abuse of illicit drugs is common, the damage done to individuals and their families has become a major threat to social life and organization. If drug abuse is to be realistically controlled, communities as well as individuals must be given alternative options that are both attractive and feasible. UNDCP will emphasize the need to strengthen the dignity and autonomy of rural and urban communities so that they can better resist the short-term economic, social and psychological "rewards" that drug abuse ostensibly presents. Integrated rural development, together with the reconstruction of urban communities affected by drug abuse, will be given increased attention and UNDCP will seek partners that can help provide and support alternative economic and social development models.

(vii) **Creating new partnerships**

19. UNDCP will actively seek to bring new partners into the fight against drug abuse. Actions to control and prevent the further spread of the problem will need to incorporate many groups and institutions in the planning and implementation of drug abuse control programmes. UNDCP will explore and create working relationships with all relevant national ministries, with non-governmental organizations, with the private sector, with trade unions and with others willing to participate in joint action. It will emphasize the role of NGOs and community-based groups and seek to enhance their involvement in national, local and regional activities. UNDCP will give new emphasis to the concept of community participation when assessing, planning, implementing and evaluating programmes, in order to guarantee their responsiveness to the special characteristics and needs of individual communities.

(viii) **Fund-raising**

20. UNDCP will attempt to broaden the base of its financial support by addressing governments, private foundations, non-governmental groups and the private sector.

21. It will also establish collaborative relationships with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, Regional Development Banks and with private sector banks to explore how innovative partnerships can be created to finance national and regional drug programmes having a direct or indirect bearing on drug abuse control. UNDCP will also explore new arrangements with bi-lateral organizations and agencies so as to enhance cooperation between them and their partner countries around commonly agreed projects and programmes. While playing an increasingly vigorous "broker" role, UNDCP will also assume a more exacting responsibility in the evaluation of projects and programmes so as to ensure the best use of available funds.

(ix) **Coordination**

22. Within the United Nations system, UNDCP will give greater attention to directing, coordinating and rationalizing all drug abuse control activities, seeking always to prevent duplication and make the optimum use of resources around agreed upon goals and objectives.

23. The particular roles to be played by the Specialized Agencies and other technical bodies in the system will be duly recognized and given an appropriate place in the response to the challenge of drug abuse worldwide. UNDCP will also go outside the UN system and involve other networks, especially in the NGO and private sectors. UNDCP will lend its good offices to the exploration of new and intensified responsibilities for them, building on their unique strengths and experience. It will seek to support them in complementing the work of governments. UNDCP will similarly seek to involve NGOs in the formulation of new global strategies and give them an enhanced status within its overall work programme.

24. UNDCP will also extend its capacity to serve countries by identifying, recognizing and working through regional and national institutions which are centres of reference and excellence. Such centres will be strengthened when necessary and will be encouraged to take on responsibility for specific projects and activities, notably in the areas of research and training.